

GORDON Gazette

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Weekend, November 7, 2020

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Calhoun-Gordon County's #1 Source for News

Annual Christmas Open House downtown shopping experience set for Sunday, Nov. 22

Brandi Owczarz
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It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Calhoun-Gordon County.

The annual shopping event Christmas Open House is being held this year with measures in place to address COVID-19 social distancing on Sunday, Nov. 22, from 1 – 5 p.m. Hosted by the Gordon County Chamber

of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority, the event showcases local retail establishments throughout downtown Calhoun that will hold special sales that day.

According to Downtown Development Director Suzanne Roberts, Santa and Mrs. Claus will be on hand this year, but instead of letting children sit in

Santa's lap, the Claus' will be riding through town on a golf cart, and children will be able to write letters to Santa and drop them off in a special mailbox located near the corner of Court Street and Wall Street.

Singer Ben Honeycutt will also be on hand at the corner of Court Street and Wall Street, performing throughout the day.

The GEM Theatre will hold two days of free viewing of "The Polar Express," with showings on both Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 21 – 22, with special seating arrangements to practice safe social distancing.

The Gordon County Chamber of Commerce encourages the community to spend locally as you shop for goods and services this

holiday season, and there's no better way to do that than to be downtown on Sunday, Nov. 22 for Christmas Open House.

READ MORE about Christmas Open House in the Gordon Gazette's FREE online E-Edition "Hometown Holidays-Giving Thanks in Gordon County," which will be released online on Monday, Nov. 16, 2020.



Public health officials confirm Gordon County's first 2020 animal rabies case

DPH reminds residents to take precautions to prevent the potentially deadly disease

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

CALHOUN, GA: Gordon County's first confirmed animal-rabies case this year has public health officials reminding everyone about the potential dangers of rabies, urging pet owners to make sure pets are vaccinated against the potentially deadly disease, and warning residents to be especially observant and cautious in the densely populated Charleston Place neighborhood, Calhoun, where the case, a rabid skunk, was found.

"You can't tell if an animal has rabies by just looking at it. A clue, though, is if the animal is acting strangely, says the Gordon County Health Department's Environmental Health Manager Christy Blair. "The best thing to do is

to never feed or approach a wild animal. Be careful of pets that you do not know. If you see a stray dog or cat, don't pet it, and if any animal is acting strangely, call your local animal control officer for help."

This is Gordon's first 2020 rabies case. In 2019, Gordon County had three rabies cases -- two raccoons and a horse -- and in 2018, Gordon had three rabies cases -- a fox and two skunks.

Officials emphasize animal rabies can be found throughout Gordon County. "Rabies is regularly found in Gordon County and is always circulating in our wild animal population," says Blair.

She cautions residents to avoid wild, stray, and possibly unvaccinated animals that may be infected with rabies and emphasizes

residents should take additional precautions to protect themselves, their families, and their pets. "Getting your pet vaccinated against rabies is the single best way to protect your family from rabies," Blair says. "It's important to do it for their protection, for our protection, and because it's state law."

"Reducing the risk of rabies in domestic animals and limiting human contact with wild animals are two measures central to the prevention of human rabies," explains Blair. Other effective precautions against rabies include:

Vaccinate all dogs, cats and ferrets against rabies. Check with your veterinarian to make sure your pets have up-to-date protection against rabies. Remember that the vaccination of pets against rabies protects



not only the pets, but more importantly, protects people.

Don't leave pet food out where wild animals can access it. Leaving pet food out is a sure way of getting wild animals to visit your home endangering you, your family and your pets.

Remind children to

avoid animals they don't recognize, especially stray or wild animals. These animals may be infected with rabies.

Small children should not be left unattended with dogs, even if the dog is a pet or the child is familiar with it.

Keep pets at home. Obey any county laws requiring that dogs be

restrained to the owner's property. Pets that are kept close to home are less likely to encounter a rabid animal.

Report any raccoon, fox, bat or skunk that is out during the day in a residential area or that

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Gordon Central celebrates A Haunted Homecoming with A Nightmare on Warrior Path.

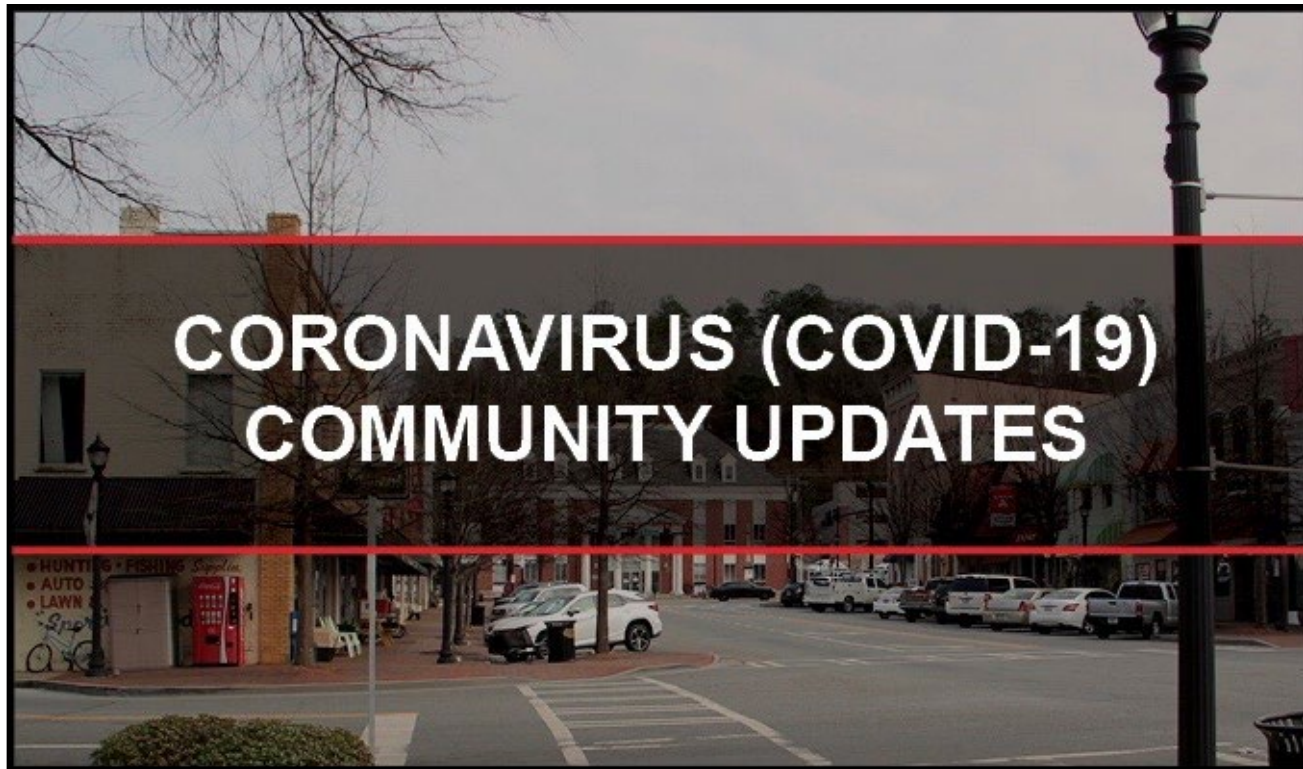
COVID numbers down more than 30 percent at Gordon County Schools; Community has 130 new cases, 1 death this week

Brandi Owczarz
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Gordon County Schools saw a 31 percent decrease of COVID-19 cases this week as school officials credit the hard work of students and staff in fighting the spread of the virus.

"By remaining diligent in our efforts to socially distance when possible, wear face coverings when distancing is not possible, wash our hands frequently and stay home when we don't feel well, we can continue to ensure in-person instruction for all of our students," said Gordon County Schools in a statement to the Gordon Gazette.

Cases of the virus at Gordon County Schools have dropped to 10 active cases system-wide, down from 32 active cases last week, a 31 percent decrease. There are 5 students within the system and 5 staff members that are considered as actively



having COVID-19. There are 3 students at Bud Middle School, 1 student at Sonorville High School and 1 student at Tolbert Elementary School that have an active case of COVID. There is one staff member each at Fairmount Elementary School, Red

Bud Elementary School, Sonorville Elementary School, Tolbert Elementary School and W.L. Swain Elementary School with an active case of the virus.

"We appreciate all of the hard work our staff, students and families have put into helping us

mitigate the spread of the virus in our facilities and throughout our community," said the system.

The reduction of numbers comes after additional measures to fight the spread of the virus were implemented, including switching both

county high schools to a hybrid attendance schedule.

Students at both Gordon Central and Sonorville High School whose last names begin with the letters A-K

See **COVID**, page 7A

Second Front

Gordon DFCS looking for more sponsors for Secret Santa Program

STAFF REPORTS

Help Gordon County Department of Family and Children Services make this Christmas special for the boys and girls in foster care. The local DFCS is looking for individuals, groups, churches and businesses to help provide these children in need with the best Christmas they can have. If you are interested in sponsoring a child, contact Jody Sanderson at the email or number below and request a foster child’s Christmas List.

Email: jody.sanderson@dhs.ga.gov
Phone: 706-802-2995



Professional Eye Associates holds ribbon cutting ceremony

Professional Eye Associates is back in town! The full-service vision care center celebrated with a ribbon cutting on Monday, October 12, 2020. The office is located at 101 Professional Court in Calhoun.

See news happening?
Call 770-547-1044 or email staff@gordongazettega.com

CPD promotes Nicholson to Shift Sergeant; first female officer to lead Calhoun Police Patrol Division

CONTRIBUTED

The Calhoun Police Department has promoted their first female officer to the rank of Shift Sergeant.

Officer Christy Nicholson made history last week when she was sworn in as the department’s first female sergeant to supervise a patrol division shift. Female officers have served in many leadership roles to include sergeant and lieutenant; however, no

female officer has ever served in the capacity of sergeant in the Calhoun Police Patrol Division until now.

Sergeant Nicholson was selected for this position based on her scores on the Sergeant exam and her excellent job performance as a patrol officer.

The Calhoun Police Department has promoted their first female officer to the rank of Shift Sergeant.

“I believe Sergeant Nicholson’s promotion sends a good message to

any young lady dreaming of getting into this line of work,” said Calhoun Police Chief Tony Pyle. “She has proven women can succeed in a male driven career field if they are determined and make the effort to succeed. I am very proud of Sergeant Nicholson and the example she has set for others.

Pictured from left to right: Patrol Commander Ken Carson, Chief Tony Pyle, Sgt. Christy Nicholson, Bo Nicholson (Christy’s husband) and Lt. David Lankford .



McBride named Chief Medical Informatics Officer for Harbin Clinic

HARBIN CLINIC

Dr. Charles Edward McBride has been named the Chief Medical Informatics Officer for Harbin Clinic, Georgia’s largest privately-owned, multi-specialty physician group. The new appointment is an expansion of Dr. McBride’s current role as Chief Medical Officer.

“Dr. McBride brings a wealth of experience to this new role and has provided guidance and wise counsel to the ITS team since he joined the clinic five years ago”, said Kenna Stock, CEO of Harbin Clinic. “He is an active member of the Health Technology Committee—providing leadership and direction in collaboration with Dr. Marc Dean, Associate Medical Director of Health Informatics, and the other members of the committee. The board of directors, leadership team, and I are confident that he will lead and support our ITS team to excel at achieving the Clinic’s information technology goals—today and into the future”.

In addition to his responsibilities as Chief Medical Officer, Dr. McBride will lead the health informatics platform of Harbin Clinic that works collaboratively with the clinical IT staff to support efficient design, implementation, and the use of health technology.

“It is an honor and a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated team of information technology services professionals”, said Dr. McBride. “Technology touches so much of our lives today including how we provide care to patients across the clinic. As CMIO, my goal is to support every member of our ITS team as they seek to enhance the care our healthcare professionals provide to our patients”.

Dr. McBride joined Harbin Clinic in 2015. Prior to joining Harbin Clinic, Dr. McBride served as vice president of clinical services for Summit Strategic Solutions in Knoxville, Tennessee. Before joining Summit, Dr. McBride was with Holston Medical Group in Kingsport, Tennessee, and Floyd Primary Care in Rome.

At Summit, Dr. McBride was responsible for clinical oversight of care coordination, health education, patient experience,



quality reporting and improvement, and direct supervision of six regional medical directors. Dr. McBride has served on the Board of Directors for the East Tennessee Health Information Network and as a delegate to the Tennessee Medical Association. Nationally, Dr. McBride serves as a member of the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

Dr. McBride attended Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee, and earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. He completed an internship and residency at Carilion Health Systems in Roanoke, Virginia, and earned an MBA from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

About Harbin Clinic
Harbin Clinic is the largest privately owned, multi-specialty physician group in Georgia, comprised of 240 medical professionals representing 40 different medical specialties and services. While Harbin Clinic began in Rome, Georgia, there are now 21 Harbin Clinic practices located in Acworth, Adairsville, Armuchee, Calhoun, Cartersville, Cedartown, Rome, and Summerville. Harbin Clinic cares for a patient population of approximately 600,000 people in Georgia and Alabama. More than 1,000 patients take advantage of our services each day.

WE'VE GOT JOBS!

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

General Labor: Day shift, \$9-\$10.50/hour

Roller Shade: \$9/hr and up based on skills. Will use circular saw.

Material Handler: 2nd shift (5:30p-4a) Mon-Fri & Saturday (3:30p-12a)

General Labor/Machine Operator: Various shifts & pay rates. Extrusion, Rubber, etc

Shipping Clerk: \$12/hr, Need excel/computer skills. Shipping experience preferred.

Maintenance Tech: \$15-\$18/hr. Repairing, troubleshooting, preventive maintenance on shrink wrapping machines and ovens. Maintain cutting tables & machines.

Creeling: Experience needed. 7am-7pm or 7pm-7am. \$14+/hr

Utility Person: \$13-\$16/hr BOE. Need Metal fab & Mig Welding skills.

Machine Operator: \$14+/hr. 7am-5pm or 5pm-3am

Tire Handler: \$11 & UP based on job/shift. 1st, 2nd & 3rd shift (Tire Handler).

Mechanic: \$15+ based on experience. Must have sewer & serger fixing skills. Day shift.

LTO: \$12/hr, day shift. Pole hyster skills required.

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Obituaries

November 7, 2020

Geraldine “Gerri” Cox

Geraldine Marie “Gerri” Cox, age 71, of Calhoun, passed away Friday morning Nov. 6 at AdventHealth Gordon.

Gerri was born Aug. 16, 1949 in Gordon County, daughter of the late Otis H. Cox and Hazel Louise Parris Cox. Besides her parents, she was preceded in death by her grandparents, John W. and Ruby Sloan Parris and Fred and Pauline Gray Cox; a sister, Hazel Patricia “Patsy” Cox.

She graduated Calhoun High School in 1967. Gerri was of the Baptist faith and prior to her retirement was employed by the Georgia Department of Labor and Highland Rivers CSB (Coosa Valley/ Three Rivers) until her retirement. After retirement, she was a delivery driver for Harbin Clinic in Rome and she worked 15 years for Anheuser-Busch in Cartersville. She was known around her neighborhood for taking in stray cats and lovingly caring for them and rehoming them if possible. She enjoyed working outdoors at her home. She loved her friends and family and she never met a stranger.

She is survived by a brother, Larry Cox and his wife Maggie; two sisters, Linda Duke and her husband Randy of Lindale and Brenda Cox and her significant other Johnny Mooney of Rome, nephew, Hank Cox and his wife LeAnne, and their children, John Henry, Lindsey Marie, and Morgan Elizabeth all of Adairsville, nephew, Daniel Cox of Kennesaw; aunt, Robbie Cox; cousin, Susan Parris.

As per her wishes, she will be cremated. A private service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Humane Society or Animal Shelter of your choice.

You may leave condolences for the family at www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com

Thomas Funeral Home has proudly been entrusted with the care of Geraldine Marie “Gerri” Cox.



David Fletcher

Mr. David Lee Fletcher, 55, of Adairsville, passed away on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020, at Redmond Regional Medical Center.

Mr. Fletcher was born in Adairsville on Nov. 18, 1964, son of Glenda Baggett Fletcher and Roy David Fletcher. Lee proudly served his community for over 30 years. He was employed with the Gordon County Fire Department, Adairsville Police Department, and retired as Captain with the Bartow County Sheriff’s Office. After he retired, you would usually find him outside on his farm messing with pigs or cutting firewood. He also enjoyed fishing and riding motorcycles. Lee loved his family; he was an amazing husband, father, grandpa, son, brother and friend.

He was preceded in death his grandparents, Ed Baggett and Roy and Mary Fletcher; father-in-law, Jack Thacker.

He is survived by his loving wife, Janet Thacker Fletcher; children, Will David (Erika) Fletcher, Benjamin Lee (Brooklyn) Fletcher, Heath (Amber) Garlin, Heather King, Jacob Key, and Amber Bagley; parents, David and Glenda Fletcher; grandmother, Lucille Baggett; grandchildren, Trystan King, Teagan King, Taylor King, Savanna Garlin, Huck Garlin, Madelyn Fletcher, and Pacey Fletcher; brother, Stephen Fletcher; nephew, Tyler Fletcher; mother-in-law, Joy Thacker and several aunts, uncles, cousins, and dear friends.

A celebration of Lee’s life was held Friday, Nov. 6, 2020, at 2 p.m. from the chapel of Barton Funeral Home, Adairsville with Rev. Jim Pinkard officiating. The family received friends Friday from 12 p.m. until 2 p.m. at Barton Funeral Home.



Family and friends attending services will be required to wear face mask and observe social distancing.

Sign the guestbook and leave online condolences at www.BartonFuneralHome.net

R. Dudley Barton & Son Funeral Home, Adairsville, is in charge of arrangements for Mr. David Lee Fletcher.

Barton Funeral Home

Gail Holcomb

Mrs. Gail Marie Bowman Holcomb, 81, of Sugar Valley, died Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020, at Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Mrs. Holcomb was born in Aragon, Ga. on Nov. 28, 1938, daughter of the late Willie Bowman and Mae Belle Bowman. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two sons, Randy Davis and Ray Davis; and two sisters, Mary Ann Coffia and Brenda McAlister. She was a member of Sugar Valley Baptist Church and prior to her retirement, she was employed by Gordon Hospital and Dr. Tygrett.

Survivors include two daughters, Sandra Clark and Kathy Higgins, both of Sugar Valley; five sons, Donnie Bowman of Calhoun, Bruce Bowman of Sugar Valley, Dennis Davis of Resaca, Johnny Williams of Resaca, and Barry Williams of Adairsville.

Funeral services for Mrs. Gail Bowman Holcomb will be held Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, at 1 p.m. from Sugar Valley Baptist Church with Pastor Mitch Phillips officiating. Interment will follow in Gordon Memorial Gardens. The family will receive friends Saturday between the hours of 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the church. Pallbearers serving will include Blaize Bowers, Johnny Williams, Barry Williams, Bruce Bowman, Clinton Burnette, and Seth Hill.

The Brannon family and Staff are honored to serve the family of Mrs. Gail Bowman Holcomb.



Interment will follow in West Union Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers serving are: Allen Byars, Cody Franklin, Jerold Shaw, Leroy Taylor, Richard Hogston, and Chris Summers.

You may leave the family online condolences at www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com

Thomas Funeral Home has proudly been entrusted with the care of Joann Holden Pitts.



Esther Smith

Esther Leona Gowens Smith, 85, passed away on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020 with her family at her bedside. She was born on Nov. 30, 1934 to the late EB Gowens and Hattie Kelly. Gowens.

She was married to Clayton Smith who preceded her in death Sept. 1, 2016. She was also preceded in death by a step-mother, Essie Martin Gowens who raised her; daughter, Myra Jean Smith; sister, Rachel Nicholson and four brothers, Ellis, JC, Herman, and Dewey Gowens.

Esther is survived by her daughters and sons-in-law, Wanda (Tony) Tumlin and Janice (James) Walraven; son, Wayne Smith; grandchildren, Christie McDougal, Joshua Smith, Casey Tumlin, Jacob Walraven, Joshua Walraven and Patrick McGuire along with several nieces and nephews.

The graveside service will be Monday, Nov. 9, 2020 at 1 p.m. from the graveside of Chandler Cemetery. The family will have a private visitation.

To leave condolences and sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Esther Leona Gowens Smith.



Emma Young

Emma Groomes Young, 80, of Resaca, died Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020. She was born on August 30, 1940 in Clarkwell, Ala. to the late Mathis and Essie Mae Bones Lee. She was preceded in death by her husband, Charlie Groomes Sr. and her second husband James Young; sons, Charlie Joe Groomes, Jr. and Kenneth Anthony Groomes; brothers, Coker Lee and Roland Lee. A brother-in-law, Bobby Ray also preceded her in death.

She is survived by her daughters and sons-in-law; Renee and Jimmy Holder, Becky and Jimmy Dean, and Elaine Bunch. Several grandchildren, great grandchildren, and a great great grandchild also survive. A sister, Alice Ray as well as many nieces, nephews and other relatives also survive.

The service will be held Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 at 3 p.m. from the graveside of Chandler Cemetery.

The family received friends on Friday, Nov. 6, 2020 at Max Brannon and Sons Funeral home from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m.

To leave condolences and sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Emma Groomes Young.



Joann Pitts

Joann Holden Pitts, age 66 of Scottsville, passed away on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020 at her residence.

Joann was born on July 21, 1954 in Gordon County, daughter of the late Ernest “C.H.” Holden and Inez McCollum Holden. In addition to her parents, Joann was also preceded in death by: two great-granddaughters, Madeline Fleetwood and Jazmine Bello; brother, Michael Holden; best friend, Jane Jerningan; father-in-law and mother-in-law, George and Violet Pitts; brothers-in-law, Buster Pitts and Clifford Pitts; and sisters-in-law, Frances Pitts, Linda Black, and Marie Lovins. She was a lifetime resident of Gordon County and member of Big Spring Baptist Church.

Joann is survived by: her husband of 40 years, Ronny Pitts; three sons, Timmie Holden, Roger Gilbert, and Randy Gilbert; two daughters, Pam Hogston and her husband Richard and Ann Robinson; two brothers, Larry Holden and Ricky Holden and his wife, Gail; sister, Patricia Brinson; grandchildren, Tiffany Holden, Tonya Holden, Tamara Stone, Allison Akins, Brooklyn Underhill, Summer Gilbert, Jarrod Holden, Haven Gilbert, Robert Gilbert, and Dustin Gilbert; and great-grandchildren, Tiana Fleetwood, Natalie Richards, Keriana Stone, Isabella Bello, Adalena Holden, Harper Holden, Antwon Fleetwood, Jr., Durrius Stone, Isaiah Holden, Joshua Akins, Jr., and Malachi Burris.

The family received friends on Friday, Nov. 6, 2020 from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Thomas Funeral Home.

Funeral Services will be conducted on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 at 2 p.m. from the Chapel of Thomas Funeral Home with Reverend Tommy Phillips officiating.



Help for the Hurting

-The Life Choice Hospice Bereavement Support Group will be meeting the 2nd Tuesday of each month. The support group is open to anyone in the community who would like to attend. The office and support group are located at 189 Professional Court, Suite 300, Calhoun. For Information, contact Jennifer at 706-602-9001.

-The Northwest Georgia Parkinson Disease Association, Inc., is offering a monthly support group for persons living with Parkinson Disease, their caregivers, family and friends. The support group will meet at Gordon Hospital; Conference Room A. For any questions about the support group and future meetings, call James Trussell at 706-235- 3164 or 706-346-5678.

-Families Anonymous is a 12-step program, for those concerned about drug abuse and behavior problems of a relative or friend. Completely anonymous, non professional, and non religious. No dues, no fees. Not connected with any hospital or agency. Located on Red Bud Road in plaza below Fitness First, next to Calhoun Counseling Center (Dr. Bledsoe’s

office). Meeting every Thursday 7 - 8 p.m. Call 770-548-7849 for more information.

-Bondage Breakers- Breaking the chains of addiction one soul at a time. Every Thursday night at 7 p.m. at Crane Eater Community Church, located at 3168 Red Bud Rd Calhoun, GA 30701.

-The Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association is sponsoring a monthly support group at Morning Pointe Assisted Living, 660 Jolly Road, on the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. For more information or directions, call Mary Braden at 770-548-4683 or Karen Parrott at 706-346-5220. For more information about dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, call 800-272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/georgia.

-Special Care Plus, a free one-on-one consultation program, offers education and information to primary caregivers of persons with dementia. Any primary caregiver who is caring for a loved one with dementia in the home is eligible to receive this program. To learn more about the Special Care Plus program, call 800-272-3900.

-Want to make a difference in

the community? Tapestry Hospice is seeking volunteers to provide companionship to our patients, read books, make crafts, garden, light house cleaning, administrative work, etc. If you’re interested contact Megan at megan.guthrie@tapestryhospice.com

-The Alzheimer’s Association’s Caring Closet was created to help offset the high cost of incontinent products and give the families support they often desperately need. If you would like to visit the nearest Closet, call the chapter office to receive a flier with locations and hours. Morning Pointe in Calhoun has a Caring Closet; call Mary Braden at 706-629-0777.

-Community volunteers are needed at Countryside Hospice Care, where the mission is to promote comfort and dignity at the end of life. The agency covers 26 Northwest Georgia counties between three offices in LaFayette, Rome, and Newnan. If you would like to participate in this rewarding program, call 706-638-7651 or 1-800-660-7381.

-Discovering Hope, an autism support group for Northwest Georgia, meets the fourth Tuesday of

each month at 6:30 p.m. at Friendship Baptist Church, Rocky Face. For more information, call Connie Post at 706-673-7765 or www.discoveringshope.us.

-Caring Connection is a telephone support group especially for caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer’s who cannot leave their homes because of care responsibilities. This support group is as close as the phone. Call 706-275-0819 or 1-800-272-3900 and ask to be enrolled in Caring Connection.

-Grief Recovery Group for those who have lost loved ones and friends, receive support and guidance with the Four Tasks of Grieving. Cost is Free. Second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. at Harris Radiation Therapy Center at Gordon Hospital. For more information or to RSVP, please call 706.879.5850.

-The Compassionate Friends of Dalton and N.W. Georgia is part of a worldwide effort that has helped many families cope with the loss of a child and to honor our children’s memory. The Compassionate Friends meets on the third Thursday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. at Evangelical Methodist Church (in the “Gathering Place”



Christmas Open House 2020
Sunday | November 22 | 1:00-6:00
Retailers Across Calhoun-Gordon County

The Gordon County Chamber of Commerce encourages you to spend locally as you shop for goods and services this holiday season--and all year long.



Keep It In The County

GEORGIA HEALTH NEWS: Most Georgia hospitals getting penalized for readmissions

ANDY MILLER, CEO
Georgia Health News

More than 80 Georgia hospitals will receive lower reimbursements from Medicare because of their high rates of patient readmissions. Federal statistics compiled by Kaiser Health News show that just 12 eligible hospitals in the state will get no penalty due to readmissions. The readmission penalties are required under the Affordable Care Act. The latest round of them pertains to hospital care from July 2016 to June 2019. More than 50 hospitals in Georgia were not evaluated by the feds under the penalty program, either because they are critical-access hospitals or facilities that specialize in psychiatric patients, children, veterans, rehabilitation or long-term care. (Here’s a link to find out which Georgia hospitals are getting penalized.) The cuts in payments come as Medicare

continues to encourage hospitals to reduce the number of discharged patients who return for another stay within a month. The penalty will be deducted from each payment for a Medicare patient stay over the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said recently that it may suspend the penalty program in the future if the extraordinary problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the spring 2020 moratorium on elective surgeries, make it too difficult to assess hospitals’ performance, Kaiser Health News reported. Medicare will lower its payments to 84 Georgia hospitals, the federal data show. The federal program cuts as much as 3 percent for each patient, although the average is generally much lower. Most of Georgia hospitals’ penalties are below 1 percent. Just

one facility is getting the maximum reduction of 3 percent: Perry Hospital in Perry. Nearly half the nation’s hospitals, many of which are still wrestling with the financial fallout of the unexpected coronavirus, will get lower payments from Medicare, Kaiser Health News reported. The number and severity of penalties are comparable to those of recent years, KHN said. The penalties are based on the frequency of readmissions of Medicare patients who had originally been treated for heart failure, heart attack, pneumonia, chronic lung disease, hip and knee replacement or coronary artery bypass graft surgery. Readmissions that were scheduled to occur are not counted. Medicare counts the readmission of a patient to a hospital within 30 days even if that hospital is not the one that originally treated and released the patient. In such cases, the penalty



is applied to the first hospital. “It’s unfortunate that hospitals will face readmission penalties in fiscal year 2021,” Akin Demehin, director of policy at the American Hospital Association, told KHN. “Given the financial strain that hospitals are under, every dollar counts, and the impact of any penalty is significant.” A hospital will be penalized if its readmission rate is higher than expected given the national trends in any one of those categories. Michael Millenson, a health quality consultant who focuses on patient safety, told KHN that the use of such penalties is an imperfect but useful mechanism to push hospitals to improve care. The designers of the penalty system envisioned it as a way to neutralize the economic benefit that a hospital gets from readmitted patients under Medicare’s

fee-for-service payment mode — i.e., getting paid for two stays instead of one. “Every industry complains the penalties are too harsh,” he said. “if you’re going to tell me we don’t need any economic incentives to do the right thing because we’re always doing the right thing — that’s not true.” *Andy Miller is the Editor and CEO of Georgia Health News.*

HIGHLAND RIVERS HEALTH: Veterans, we honor you and are here for you



Melanie Dallas
CEO - Highland Rivers

At the end of September, National Recovery Month, Highland Rivers Health hosted a special event for our veterans. Called Operation Gratitude, the virtual celebration – held like so many things these days on Zoom – allowed veterans who receive services from our agency to interact, learn about our plans for a veteran-focused recovery center, and have the comradery and support of others who understand their unique challenges and experiences. While Operation Gratitude featured many memorable moments, the highlight of the event was the unvarnished and honest personal stories shared by two veterans who receive services from Highland Rivers – of their experiences in the military, in combat, of their lingering struggles and, most compellingly, their journeys to living in recovery. A video of the event can be viewed on the Facebook pages of Highland Rivers Health, the Highland Rivers Foundation and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. I want to thank, again, the donors and sponsors that made Operation Gratitude possible: the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse, Highland Rivers Foundation, Forever We, Inc., Home Depot,

Cherokee County Sheriff’s Office, and Extremely Clean Floor Services, as well as the hardworking Highland Rivers staff that put this event together. I wanted to write about Operation Gratitude not because I believe Highland Rivers deserves any special recognition for such an event, but rather because I think our veterans deserve special recognition – and Operation Gratitude is one of the ways our agency recognizes the veterans that trust us to walk beside them on their recovery journey. As we recognize Veterans Day November 11, I want to reiterate Highland Rivers’ commitment to ensuring veterans know we are proud to serve them, and that we have services specifically tailored to their needs. To begin, if you visit our website or see any of our print materials, the description of our agency specifically lists veterans as among those we serve: children and adolescents, adults, families and veterans. We do this to make sure veterans – and those who might have a loved one who is a veteran – know they are always welcome at Highland Rivers Health. As one of the largest Community Service Boards in Georgia, we are also one of the largest providers of behavioral health services to veterans in Georgia; we have partnered with the Atlanta VA Medical Center for many years. We also partner with the Cherokee Veterans Treatment Court to provide mental health and substance use treatment to veterans who are charged with criminal offenses but are eligible for diversionary treatment. Highland Rivers has worked to tailor our services to the unique

needs of veterans as well. We provide a variety of services specifically for veterans, including outpatient counseling for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), prolonged exposure and military sexual abuse. We also offer PTSD and veteran peer support groups, so veterans can learn from others who have had similar experiences and can relate to their challenges. In addition, Highland Rivers provides crisis intervention and stabilization, veteran-specific supportive housing assistance, supported employment, substance use treatment and community support services, among other programs. Finally, Highland Rivers is proud to have as our Veterans Services Coordinator Rick Twist. Rick is an Iraq combat veteran who has experienced homelessness, combat trauma and lives in recovery with PTSD and a substance use disorder. He is a certified peer specialist and runs several of Highland Rivers’ veterans groups. When he says he understands how veterans feel and the challenges they face, it’s because he knows firsthand. He puts his heart into his work at Highland Rivers – and our agency and the veterans he works with are better for it. In closing, I want to thank all of America’s veterans for their work, their sacrifice and their commitment; Highland Rivers Health is proud to serve you. Our doors are always open to you as you further your recovery journey, and know that, “we’ve got your six.” *Melanie Dallas is a licensed professional counselor and CEO of Highland Rivers Health, which provides treatment and recovery services for*

individuals with mental disabilities in a 12-county region of northwest Georgia that includes Fannin, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk and Bartow, Cherokee, Floyd, and Whitfield counties.

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No application fee and quick admission virtual events launched at GHC this November

GEORGIA HIGHLANDS

Applicants to Georgia Highlands College (GHC) now have an opportunity to receive an immediate admissions decision for the spring, summer or fall 2021 semester by registering for an Instant Decision Day.

Instant Decision Day not only expedites the process for enrollment, but it also helps applicants save money by waiving the college's application fee.

The events are all virtual, and participants can register at decision.highlands.edu

"Instant Decision Day helps applicants reduce the entire admissions process to one day rather than having to spread the application process over a course of weeks and/or months. We want to assist our students in any way, shape or form that we can," Director of Admissions Maggie Schuyler said. "We are simplifying the admissions process and giving everyone more hands-on

assistance."

Applicants can participate in one of three virtual Instant Decision Days on the following dates:

Register by Monday, Nov. 9, for an Instant Decision Day on Wednesday, Nov. 11

Register by Monday, Nov. 16, for an Instant Decision Day on Wednesday, Nov. 18

Applicants should request their high school transcripts via their high school guidance counselor to be sent to GHC Admissions. If they have attended another college or university, then they should request their transcripts from the institution's Registrar's Office to be sent to GHC Admissions.

All transcripts should be sent via an electronic transcript issuing services such as eScrip-Safe, the National Student Clearinghouse, or GAFutures.

"To expedite the process, Georgia Highlands College recommends applicants submit their required documentation electronically," Schuyler said.



In addition, future students can meet with an admissions counselor via the GHC Virtual Hub (virtualservices.highlands.edu), Monday through Friday. They may also schedule a personalized on-campus tour at any GHC campus location in Rome, Cartersville, Dallas, Douglasville or Marietta by filling out an online form (visit.highlands.edu).

Head over to decision.highlands.edu for more information and to register for the next Instant Decision Day virtual event at GHC.

2020 Holiday Gift Guide from Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

This holiday season, wow friends and family with the gift of the great outdoors. Choose from the below seven ideas and watch a simple present turn into a new infatuation with Mother Nature.

Gift Cards – Fit 37 lakes, seven waterfalls, three canyons and a swamp into one little stocking. Convenient gift cards can be used on campsites, cabins, yurts, golf greens, picnic shelters, museums, boat rentals, gift shops and more. They come in any denomination starting at \$5 and can be purchased at most Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, online at GaStateParks.org/GiftCards or by calling 1-800-434-0982. With no shortage of possibilities, gift cards are the perfect solution to the gift-giving conundrum.

Trendy Gear for the Outdoor Enthusiast – Most state parks have gift shops where you can snag an ENO hammock, KAVU

pack or blanket to snuggle up in as the colder weather creeps upon us. While browsing, pick up a gift with hometown roots including Georgia Grown items, local honey, nature-themed books, clothes and toys. Gift shop hours vary by location, so be sure to check prior to arrival.

Historic Site Annual Passes – Squeeze 18 outings into one little card with a Historic Site Annual Pass. Perfect for Georgia newcomers or students, the pass is good for admission to Etowah Indian Mounds, Dahlonega Gold Museum, Roosevelt's Little White House, Fort King George and numerous other destinations on GaStateParks.org/History. Passes may be purchased on GaStateParks.org/ThingsToKnow or at historic sites.

State Parks Annual ParkPasses – With more than 60 parks across Georgia, there are many ways to treat family or friends to a year of outdoor fun, long after the seasons change. Annual ParkPasses are

\$50 and help fund trail work, dock maintenance and shelter renovations. Half-off ParkPass discounts are available for seniors 62 and older, as well as 25% off for active-duty military and veterans. Bonus: Buy a Friends of Georgia State Parks membership and receive an Annual ParkPass in return. To purchase, visit any Georgia State Park or GaStateParks.org/ThingsToKnow.

Weekend Getaways – Lock in 2021 travel plans and make experiencing nature easy and enjoyable for the whole family by reserving an adventure at a state park. From mountains to marshes, the options for accommodations are truly endless and range from cottages to campsites and even the beautiful 19th-century Burnham House at General Coffee State Park. Six Georgia State Parks offer "glamping" yurts as well. Reservations can be made at GaStateParks.org/Reservations.

Unique Experiences – Georgia's state parks offer visitors a variety



of unique activities in several locations, making the great outdoors the perfect backdrop for explorers and adventurers of any skill level. Try geocaching or archery, purchase a membership to Park Paddlers, Muddy Spokes or Canyon Climbers clubs, or reach new heights while tree climbing at Panola Mountain. For more information on these unique experiences and details on activity availability visit, GaStateParks.org/ParkActivities.

Tails on Trails Club – The perfect gift for four-legged family

is the Georgia State Parks' Tails on Trails Club, getting Fido out in the great outdoors. The quest challenges dog hikers to explore 12 specific trails at Georgia State Parks. Members get a bragging-rights t-shirt and matching bandana for Bailey. Finish them all and get a certificate of completion to show off on social media. To join, stop into one of the participating parks or buy a card online at GaStateParks.com/TailsOnTrailsClub.

Monday, November 16, 2020

Giving Thanks in Gordon County

HOMETOWN HOLIDAYS!

A Special, Free E-Edition Celebrating the Upcoming Holiday Season

FEATURING:

- Holiday Recipes
- Holiday Shopping
- Christmas Open House
- Retail Features
- Community Events
- We Are Thankful...



GORDON Gazette

ELECTION

From page 1A

is behaving strangely to the local Georgia Department of Natural Resources Game and Fish Division office at 1-800-241-4113.

Report stray dogs and cats and aggressive or sick-appearing animals to the local animal-control office.

Don't attempt to assist injured or sick animals without professional help. Even animals which would never bite otherwise can bite when sick or in pain.

Bats found in sleeping quarters should be captured and tested for rabies even when there is no evidence of a bite wound or contact with the

sleeping individuals.

After-hours calls involving aggressive animals should be directed to 911.

After-hours calls involving animal bites and their potential for rabies exposure should be directed to 866-PUB-HLTH (866-782-4584).

Gordon County residents can contact the Gordon County Health Department's Environmental Health Office in Calhoun at 706-624-1440 for additional information or with any questions or concerns.

Residents can also visit the Northwest Georgia Public Health website at <https://nwgapublichealth.org/environmental-health/rabies> for information on animal rabies and rabies precautions. Residents can also visit <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> for comprehensive rabies information.

About the Gordon County Health Department:

The Gordon County Health Department works to prevent disease, injury, and disability; promote health, safety, and wellbeing; and prepare for and respond to disasters, thereby improving the quality of life for individuals and families in Gordon County. We provide a wide range of medical services, track and prevent the spread of disease, promote health and safety through education and communication, monitor area environmental safety, including restaurant inspections, and ensure our community is prepared for public health emergencies. Find us on the web at www.nwgapublichealth.org/counties/gordon. Follow us on Facebook to receive news, emergency messages, and health-and-safety information at <https://www.facebook.com/GordonDPH>

COVID

From page 1A

attend school in person one week, then change over the next week to online instruction via Schoology. Students with a last name beginning L-Z are on the opposite schedule of the previous group, completing online learning at home when the other group is receiving in-school instruction. This has reduced the amount of people in the schools at any particular time. The hybrid schedule will continue through the end of November.

"Gordon County Schools has found it necessary to move to hybrid instructional model, as outlined in the district's Back to School guidance in August, for both Gordon Central High School and Sonoraville High School beginning Monday, October 19. The tentative return date to full-time, in-person instruction will be Monday, November 30, 2020," said the system in a statement. "The decision to temporarily move to a hybrid schedule for both Gordon County high schools is a precautionary measure and comes following an increase in active

COVID cases, resulting in a higher number of precautionary quarantines."

According to GCS, extracurricular activities will continue, unless otherwise notified by the school. This closure does not impact any other Gordon County school, and all elementary and middle schools will operate as normal.

Gordon County Schools' reporting is slightly different than the City school system. Gordon County Schools' weekly numbers, reported each Friday afternoon, show the new cases of COVID-19 for the week, plus any previous cases that are still active. You can find those numbers on their website at <https://www.gcbe.org/domain/5112>

Calhoun City Schools' new cases of COVID-19 this week increased five cases to 11 total cases system-wide; there are 8 total students (5 students at Calhoun High School, 2 students at Calhoun Middle School and 1 student at Calhoun Primary School) to test positive for COVID this week, and 3 staff members (all 3 at Calhoun Primary). Last week, there were 6 total cases at the school system.

Calhoun City Schools post the new case numbers each Friday afternoon, and includes the previous

week's numbers separately on their website at <https://www.calhounschoools.org/summer-resources/ccsd-covid-19-case-status-reportnew-page>

Both school systems have adopted strict cleaning procedures and are following the health and safety guidelines set forth by the CDC concerning social distancing.

Students and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 at either school system cannot return to school until they meet the Department of Public Health's Return to School Guidance After COVID-19 Illness or Exposure.

Numbers of new positive cases jumped in Gordon County this past week. At press time Saturday morning, Nov. 7, Gordon County has had 2,558 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began – that's up 130 cases since the same time last week. COVID-19 related deaths now stand at 48, up one death from last week, but DPH also reports two additional probably deaths from COVID. There have been 143 hospitalizations in Gordon County due to COVID-19 since March, up 7 hospitalizations since last week.

Church Calendar

ONGOING

-Philadelphia Christian School is located off Highway 41 between Calhoun and Adairsville. The school offers 4-year-old kindergarten through 12th grade, using the A-Beka curriculum. To find out more about the school, call the office at 706-625-3233.

-Faith Deliverance Ministry and Outreach will be taking donations of clothes, shoes, also all house hold items to help needy families. Call Minister Evelyn Adams at 706-671-7988.

-Celebrate Recovery, a faith based 12-step program, meets every Tuesday at 6 p.m. at Relevate Church in Ranger off 411. Call Nicole for information: 706-979-4713/706-290-8028.

-East Calhoun Church of God, at 401 Peters Street, gives out groceries and clothing through the "Feed the Needy" ministry each Saturday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The church hosts a miracle healing service every first Friday at 7 p.m. For more information, contact "Feed the Needy" ministry director Florence Jones at 706-409-1981. Senior pastor is Keith Reid.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

-Fairmount Church of Christ, located

at 265 South Avenue in Fairmount, Ga. Minister Bobby Gayton. Everyone is invited to visit and worship with us. Sunday morning Services at 11 a.m.; Bible study at 10 a.m.; Wednesday Bible study at 6 p.m.

-Fairmount United Methodist Church-Loving One Another To Christ. Sunday School at 10 a.m.; Worship Service at 11 a.m. Children's Church provided. New Minister now Leading. New programs and community outreach coming soon.

-Pastor Terry Reisner invites everyone to the Vision Pentecostal Ministry located at 401 South Wall Street in Calhoun. Come hear the truth of God's Word Sundays at 11 a.m.

-Faith Deliverance Church & Outreach Ministry Welcomes Everyone to an Anointed Church Service at 1320 Dawnville Road in Dalton every Sunday at 6 p.m. and Thursday at 7 p.m. Pastor and Evangelist Evelyn Adams, also an Anointed Gospel Singing. Come expecting Jesus to move for you. Miracles, Healing, Deliverance, Salvation. For more information or directions, call Minister Evelyn Adams (706) 671-7988

-Pine Chapel United Methodist Church, located at 2232 Pine Chapel Road in Resaca, "A place to begin, belong and become." Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m. Pastor Louise W. Elmore.

-Resaca Assembly of God, located at 904 Resaca Lafayette Rd NW, would like to welcome everyone to please come and join in worship and meet our Pastor Steve Burns and his lovely wife Cathy. Sunday school at 10 a.m., worship service on Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.. Everyone

is invited.

-Calhoun First United Methodist Church Sunday Worship times: 9:00 a.m., traditional worship; 10 a.m., Sunday school; 11 a.m., contemporary service (in the CAC). Calhoun First UMC is located at 205 East Line Street in downtown Calhoun.

Tallatoona Community Action Partnership

LIHEAP Heating Assistance

Beginning November 2, 2020 at 8:30am, Tallatoona will begin accepting appointments for the LIHEAP Heating Assistance Program for senior households 65 years of age and older.

Beginning December 1, 2020 at 8:30am, the general public may begin scheduling appointments.

Appointments are provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. To receive assistance applicants must qualify based on the FY 2021 annual income guidelines. For more information visit www.tallatoonacap.org.

SCHEDULE ONLINE: WWW.TALLATOONACAP.ORG

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19, all Tallatoona offices are closed to the public. Appointments will be completed remotely by telephone. All required documents will be accepted via fax, mail, or quick drop off at local county offices. Please DO NOT send documents prior to your appointment.

SCHEDULE BY PHONE: 770-817-4666, Option 2 or 770-773-7730, Option 2 (toll free for 706 area codes)

Tallatoona Services Bartow, Cobb, Douglas, Floyd, Gordon, Haralson, Paulding, and Polk Counties

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GORDON CENTRAL CELEBRATES HOCO 2020



Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

It was A Nightmare on Warrior Path this past week as Gordon Central celebrated Homecoming 2020. The Halloween theme coincided with the annual Homecoming game, held on Friday, Oct. 30, where Gordon Central beat Coosa 22-7.

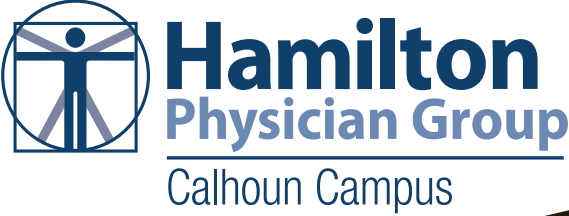
During halftime of the game, senior Emily Pierce was named Homecoming Queen. The Warriors continued to celebrate Homecoming this past week, with various dress-up days at school, including: Day of the Walking Dead (pajama day), Which Witch is Which? (twin day), Scarecrow Day (flannel and friends day), Hocus Pocus Day (costume day) and Friday Night Frights (blackout spirit day).

On Thursday evening, Gordon Central held a reverse Homecoming Parade on their campus, where Carlos Escobar was crowned Homecoming King. The Homecoming Court, class “floats,” which were actual Spirit Vehicles this year due to COVID, the marching band, cheerleaders, football team and other organizations at the school were on hand enjoying the festivities. Spirit Vehicle winners included

1st place – Seniors “Purge,” 2nd place – Sophomores “The Camp Out,” 3rd place – Freshmen “Warriors Rise Up,” and 4th place – Juniors “Eagles Worst Nightmare.”

All Photos: GORDON COUNTY SCHOOLS





Michelle Little, DO

Family Medicine

Jennifer Smith, FNP-C

Family Medicine

Justin Hare, DO

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